

14. Short-Term Uses vs Long-Term Productivity Irreversible Environmental Change

Short-Term Uses vs Long-Term Productivity

The scope of this analysis is described by the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines (1986).

(e) The Relationship between Local Short-Term Uses of Man's Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-Term Productivity. Describe the cumulative and long-term effects of the proposed project which adversely affect the state of the environment. Special attention should be given to impacts which narrow the range of beneficial uses of the environment or pose long-term risks to health or safety. In addition, the reasons why the proposed project is believed by the sponsor to be justified now, rather than reserving an option for further alternatives, should be explained.

Impacts which will result from buildout under the General Plan are necessarily cumulative in nature and are discussed throughout this EIR. A particularly relevant effect is potential water quality degradation as a result of development within the upper Rock Creek watershed. This is an impact which threatens the long-term quality of a drinking water supply.

There are potentially significant long-term risks to health or safety associated with industrial development and hazardous wastes. Those normally associated with urban development and use, such as increased vehicle traffic, noise, and air pollutants will also occur.

Agricultural lands will be decreased. Urbanized land (commercial, industrial, and residential lots smaller than two acres) will total approximately 49% at buildout (70% within existing City limits only).

Irreversible Environmental Changes

The nature of irreversible environmental changes is described in the following CEQA excerpt (1986):

(f) Any Significant Irreversible Environmental Changes which Would Be Involved in the Proposed Action should it be Implemented. Uses of non-renewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project may be irreversible since a large commitment of such resources makes removal or non-use thereafter unlikely. Primary impacts and, particularly, secondary impacts (such as highway improvement which provides access to a previously inaccessible area) generally commit future generations to similar uses. Also irreversible damage can result from environmental accidents associated with the project. Irretrievable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified.

Approval of the General Plan will permit the use of non-renewable resources during the on-going construction and operation of various individual projects consistent with the Plan. During this on-going construction, the use of building materials and energy resources will largely be irreversible and irretrievable. During the life of the Plan, substantial amounts of energy, water and other natural resources will be consumed.

The proposed Plan will commit future generations to continued urban use of the area. The loss of part of the area's value for pleasing open space will occur. The Plan will also allow for reduced habitat for small mammals, reptiles, and birds. Future generations will experience both the benefits of additional housing, retail, and other urban opportunities as well as adverse effects of the various consequences described in this report.